MARY MARIE

By Eleanor H. Porter

Illustrations by R. H. Livingstone

"THAT'S ALL!"

SYNOPSIS.—In a preface Mary Marie explains her apparent "double personality" and just why is a "cross-current and a contradiction"; she also tells her reasons for writing the diary—later to be a novel. The diary is commenced at Andersonville. Mary begins with Nurse Sarah's account of her (Mary's) birth, which seemingly interested her father, who is a famous astronomer, less than a new star which was discovered the same night. Her name is a compromise; her mother wanted to call her Viola and her father insisted on Abigail Jane. The child quickly learned that her home was in some way different from those of her small friends, and was puzzled thereat. Nurse Sarah tells her of her mother's arrival at Andersonville as a bride and how astonished they all were at the sight of the dainty eighteen-year-old girl whom the sedate professor had chosen for a wife. Nurse Sarah makes it plain why the household seemed a strange one to the child and how her father and mother drifted apart through misunderstanding, each too proud to in any way attempt to smooth over the situation. Mary tells of the time spent "out west" where the "perfectly all right and genteel and respectable" divorce was being arranged for, and her mother's (to her) unaccountable behavior. By the court's decree the child is to spend six months of the year with her mother and six months with her father. Boston is Mother's home. Mary describes her life as Marie with her mother in Boston.

CHAPTER—IV—Continued.
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Well, to resume and go on. There's the violinist. I mustn't forget him. But, then, nobody could forget him. He's lovely; so handsome and distinguished-looking with his perfectly beautiful dark eyes and white teeth. And he plays—well, I'm simply crazy over his playing. I only wish Carrie Heywood could hear him. She thinks her brother can play. He's a traveling violinist with a show; and he came home once to Andersonville. And I heard him. But he's not the real thing at all. Not a bit. Why, he might be anybody, our grocer, or the butcher, up there playing that violin. His eyes are little and blue, and his hair is red and very short. I wish she could hear our violinist play!

And there's another man that comes to the parties and teas;—oh, of course there are others, lots of them, married men with wives, and unmarried men with and without sisters. But I mean another man specially. His name is Harlow. He's a little man with a brown pointed beard and big soft brown eyes. He's really awfully good-looking, too. I don't know what he does do; but he's married. I know that. He never brings his wife, though; but Mother's always asking for her, clear and distinct, and she always smiles, and her voice kind of tinkles like little silver bells. But just the same he never brings her.

He never takes her anywhere. I heard Aunt Hattie tell Mother so at the very first, when he came. She said they weren't a bit happy together, and that there'd probably be a divorce before long. But Mother asked for her just the same the very next time. And she's done it ever since.

I think I know now why she does. I found out, and I was simply thrilled. It was so exciting! You see, they were lovers once themselves—Mother and this Mr. Harlow. Then something happened and they quarreled. That was just before Father came.

Of course Mother didn't tell me this, nor Aunt Hattie. It was two ladies. I heard them talking at a tea one day. I was right behind them, and I couldn't get away, so I just couldn't help hearing what they said.

I'm not sure, anyway, that Mother'll want to get married again. From little things she says I rather guess she doesn't think much of marriage, anyway. One day I heard her say to Aunt Hattie that it was a very pretty theory that marriages were made in heaven, but that the real facts of the case were that they were made on earth. And another day I heard her say that one trouble with marriage was that the husband and wife didn't know how to play together and to rest together. And lots of times I've heard her say little things to Aunt Hattie that showed how unhappy her marriage had been.

But last night a funny thing happened. We were all in the library reading after dinner, and Grandpa looked up from his paper and said something about a woman that was sentenced to be hanged and how a whole lot of men were writing letters protesting against having a woman hanged; but there were only one or two letters from women. And Grandpa said that only went to prove how much more lacking in a sense of fitness of things women were than men. And he was just going to say more when Aunt Hattie bristled up and tossed her chin, and said, real indignantly:

"A sense of fitness of things, indeed! Oh, yes, that's all very well to say. There are plenty of men, no doubt, who are shocked beyond anything at the idea of hanging a woman; but those same men will think nothing of going straight home and making life for some other woman so absolutely miserable that she'd think hanging would be a lucky escape from something worse."

"Harriet!" exclaimed Grandpa in a shocked voice.

"Well, I mean it!" declared Aunt Hattie emphatically. "Look at poor Madge here, and that wretch of a husband of hers!"

And just here is where the funny thing happened. Mother bristled up—Mother!—and even more than Aunt Hattie had. She turned red and then white, and her eyes blazed.

"That will do, Hattie, please, in my presence," she said, very cold, like ice. "Dr. Anderson is not a wretch at all. He is an honorable, scholarly gentleman. Without doubt he meant to be kind and considerate. He simply did not understand me. We weren't suited to each other. That's all."

And she got up and swept out of the room.

Now, wasn't that funny? But I just loved it, all the same. I always love Mother when she's superb and haughty and disdainful.

Well, after she had gone Aunt Hattie looked at Grandpa and Grandpa looked at Aunt Hattie. Grandpa

"That Will Do, Hattie, Please, In My Presence," She Said, Very Cold, Like Ice.

shrugged his shoulders, and gave his hands a funny little flourish; and Aunt Hattie lifted her eyebrows and said:

"Well, what do you know about that?" (Aunt Hattie forgot I was in the room, I know, or she'd never in the world have used slang like that!) "And after all the things she's said about how unhappy she was!" finished Aunt Hattie.

Grandpa didn't say anything, but just gave his funny little shrug again.

And it was kind of queer, when you come to think of it—about Mother, I mean, wasn't it?

ONE MONTH LATER

Well, I've been here another whole month, and it's growing nicer all the time. I just love it here.

And Mother is happy, I'm sure she is. Somebody is doing something for her every moment—seems so. They are so glad to get her back again. I know they are. I heard two ladies talking one day, and they said they were. They called her "Poor Madge," and "Dear Madge," and they said it was a shame that she should have had such a wretched experience, and that they for one should try to do everything they could to make her forget.

And that's what they all seem to be trying to do—to make her forget. There isn't a day goes by but that somebody sends flowers or books or candy, or invites her somewhere, or takes her to ride or to the theater, or comes to see her, so that Mother is in just one whirl of good times from morning till night. Why, she'd just have to forget. She doesn't have any time to remember. I think she is forgetting, too. Oh, of course she gets tired, and sometimes rainy days or twilights I find her on the sofa in her room not reading or anything, and her face looks 'most as it used to sometimes after they'd been having one of their incompatibility times. But I don't find her that way very often, and it doesn't last long. So I really think she is forgetting.

About the prospective suitors—I found that "prospective suitor" in a story a week ago, and I just love it. It means you probably will want to marry her, you know. I use it all the time now—in my mind—when I'm thinking about those gentlemen that come here (the unmarried ones). I forgot and used it out loud one day to Aunt Hattie; but I shan't again. She said, "Mercy!" and threw up her hands and looked over to Grandpa the way she does when I've said something she thinks is perfectly awful.

There it is again! I'm not old enough. When will I be allowed to take my proper place in life? Echo answers when.

Well, to resume and go on.

What was I talking about? Oh, I know—the prospective suitors. (Aunt Hattie can't bear me when I just write it, anyway.) Well, they all come just as they used to, only there are more of them now—two fat men, one slim one, and a man with a halo of hair round a bald spot. Oh, I don't mean that any of them are really suitors yet. They just come to call and to tea, and send her flowers and candy. And Mother isn't a mite nicer to one than she is to any of the others. Anybody can see that. And she shows very plainly she's no notion of picking anybody out yet. But of course I can't help being interested and watching.

As I said before, I don't believe Mother'll choose Mr. Harlow, anyway, even when the time comes. As for any of the others—I can't tell. She treats them all just exactly alike, as far as I can see. Polite and pleasant, but not at all loverlike. I was talking to Peter one day about it, and I asked him. But he didn't seem to know, either, which one she will be likely to take, if any.

Peter's about the only one I can ask. Of course I couldn't ask Mother, or Aunt Hattie And Grandfather—well, I should never think of asking Grandpa a question like that. But Peter—Peter's a real comfort. I'm sure I don't know what I should do for somebody to talk to and ask questions about things down here, if it wasn't for him. He takes me to school and back again every day; so of course I see him quite a lot.

Speaking of school, it's all right, and of course I like it, though not quite so well as I did. There are some of the girls—well, they act queer. I don't know what is the matter with them. They stop talking—some of them—when I come up, and they make me feel, sometimes, as if I didn't belong. Maybe it's because I came from a little country town like Andersonville. But they've known that all along, from the very first. And they didn't act at all like that at the beginning. Maybe it's just their way down here. If I think of it I'll ask Peter tomorrow.

Well, I guess that's all I can think of this time.

MOST FOUR MONTHS LATER

It's been ages since I've written here, I know. But there's nothing special happened. Everything has been going along just about as it did at the first. Oh, there is one thing different—Peter's gone. He went two months ago. We've got an awfully old chauffeur now. One with gray hair and glasses, and homely, too. His name is Charles. The very first day he came, Aunt Hattie told me never to talk to Charles, or bother him with questions; that it was better he should keep his mind entirely on his driving.

She needn't have worried. I should never dream of asking him the things I did Peter. He's too stupid. Now Peter and I got to be real good friends—until all of a sudden Grandpa told him he might go. I don't know why.

I don't see as I'm any nearer finding out who Mother's lover will be than I was four months ago. I suppose it's still too soon. Peter said one day he thought widows ought to wait at least a year, and he guessed grass-widows were just the same. My, how mad I was at him for using that name about my mother! Oh, I knew what he meant. I'd heard it at school. (I know now what it was that made those girls act so queer and horrid.) There was a girl—I never liked her, and I suspect she didn't like me, either. Well, she found out Mother had a divorce. (You see, I hadn't told it. I remembered how those girls out West bragged.) And she told a lot of the others. But it didn't work at all as it had in the West. None of the girls in this school here had a divorce in their families; and, if you'll believe it, they acted—some of them—as if it was a disgrace, even after I told them good and plain that ours was a perfectly respectable and genteel divorce. Nothing I could say made a mite of difference, with some of the girls, and then is when I first heard that perfectly horrid word, "grass-widow." So I knew what Peter meant, though I was furious at him for using it. And I let him see it good and plain.

"There it is again! I'm not old enough!"

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

Feather Gluttons.

Ransom Kennicott, chief forester in the Illinois forest preserve district, says that robins eat more than other birds.

Seekest thou a faithful friend? Get thee a dog.

Self-Protection.

"Why did you brag so on Fred's rotten home-brew?" "I had to; I gave him the recipe!"—Judge.

It is within the powers of the least of us to be polite, straight from the heart.